

January 19, 2021

Committee Chair Barve  
And House Environmental and Transportation Committee  
Maryland General Assembly  
Annapolis, MD

Subject: In support of House Bill 80 - Department of Transportation and Department of the Environment - Purple Line Tree Replacement Plan

Dear Chair Barve and Committee Members,

I am writing in **strong support of HB0080** to require MTA/MDOT to replace trees lost to Purple Line construction in the communities themselves, with a priority on environmental and economic justice communities. The significant loss of tree canopy from New Carrollton to Bethesda has created heat islands, diminished air quality, increased stormwater runoff, reduced habitat for animals vital to local agriculture, and created a visual wound through residential and commercial neighborhoods.

MTA could not replace native canopy trees inside the narrow "limits of disturbance" of the PL route due to their selection of a catenary wire system that requires clear air space. MTA instead mitigated the significant canopy tree loss by **purchasing 83 acres of existing forest in remote parts of Prince George's and Montgomery counties, leaving PL neighborhoods barren**. Maryland's Attorney General recently ruled that mitigating tree loss through the purchase of existing forest is **not legal** as it does not comply with the intent of the state FCA. See the October 26 2020 opinion from the Attorney General's office

<https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Opinions%20Documents/2020/105oag066%20.pdf>.

With just a little extra funding and a push from an enacted HB0080, MTA/MDOT can contribute to healing in communities along the PL route by leading and aggressively implementing, with cooperation from private and public landowners, native canopy tree replacement in the impacted neighborhoods and streetscapes.

**Our downcounty canopy trees and forests are being destroyed due to infill development and large transportation projects**. We are in a climate emergency. Scientists have exhaustively documented the grossly undervalued contribution of trees to a healthy environment and healthy human population.

Our state must step up and make sure valuable trees are replaced in the subwatershed where they were destroyed.

Thank you for moving HB0080 out of committee with a favorable review.

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